

PCC Meeting Minutes April 25th at St Mark's Church 7.30pm

Opening: John 10: 1-18 The Shepherd and his sheep. Followed by prayer from Rev Ben King.

1. Apologies: None

Present: Rev Ben King (Vicar and Chair), Ann Arnold (Vice Chair), Peter Arnold (Treasurer), Janet Bone (DS rep), Ellen Kemp (PSO and DS rep), Charlotte Mouzer, Judith Nyabango, Mike Richardson (CW) Jane Ridout (Sec) Yvonne Tiley (DS rep) Bethany Yates (Parish Worker) and Sharon Yates (CW)

2. Minutes of the meeting held 7.3.2022 and Matters Arising:

A correction on page 3, item 3 concerning mobile phone charges: Ben's and the Church Wardens' phones are £11 per month and Bethany Yates' contract costs £10 per month. Ann Arnold reported that the agreed bins for recycling were out of stock but that the matter is in hand.

- a) **Standing Committee Resolutions:** None. The whole PCC had agreed to the expenditure from Chubb for lights and repairs to the fire alarm which Mike Richardson then organised.

3. Lent, Holy Week and Easter review:

Ben quickly reviewed our initiatives and services. The Justice booklet was felt to have been successful and fitted current times.

The Lent prayer course received an enthusiastic response from those who did it.

Presentation was discussed and how it might have been received by those in the congregation who heard the sermon but did not attend the Lent course. Participation by the young people was welcomed and there was some discussion about voice projection at future services.

It was mentioned that it would have been good to have visited other churches during Holy Week as a shared preparation but unfortunately Ben said he had received the email only on the Saturday before Palm Sunday.

It had been very encouraging to see so many people at the Easter Day service. It was noted that the Easter cross looked beautiful with its floral decoration which people have stopped to look at and talked about. It looked powerful and yet was simple.

The Easter Monday egg hunt was enjoyed by many more than those who entered officially, mostly quite young children, but older ones were seen enjoying the hunt.

It was suggested that we could put up pictures of what we had done over Easter and indeed in the weeks to come on our outside notice board.

Ben thanked the PCC for their input and said how good it had been to finally gather together for the Easter celebration.

4. Future Employment of Parish Worker:

(Bethany Yates and Sharon Yates left the meeting for this discussion)

Ben said he was very pleased with how well Bethany has settled into the role of Parish Worker and how good it is to have someone working with the young people who is nearer in age to them. Bethany would like to continue in the role beyond September and is happy to continue with the same brief.

Ben said that the PCC might feel it was now the right thing to open up the field to others. The point was made that the way we employed her last Autumn is now non-compliant but also

that the new regulations came out very shortly after her appointment so we were fortunate. We would certainly have to put new forms in place in the future if anyone else were to be employed.

Ben is talking to Beth about applying for an LOB grant which would cover a third of her work which is with the youth, otherwise we would use legacy money for Beth's salary.

The point was made that Bethany is giving us more of her time than that for which she is officially paid and that is having good repercussions. We now have an active Instagram account and lots of photographic evidence building up.

Another point was made that although Bethany is indeed a breath of fresh air in the life of the church, we need to keep sight of the fact that at some point she will leave. Now, within the new regulations we would have to open up the role outside the church. We also would not have the right to expect as much from someone else as Beth has given us.

Ben suggested that the contract stays the same and is extended. The question of a pay review came up which would normally be after 6 months. It was suggested that we look at comparative roles. Peter Arnold said that he would look at this before September when the contract is renewed.

Ben King proposed that we proceed with a further 12 month extension of Beth's contract until September 2023 on the current basis and this was seconded by Jane Ridout. The PCC voted for this unanimously.

Bethany was told of the decision and thanked.

5. Vicar's Report: (sent out to members before the meeting)

a. Worship Pattern: Ben felt that St Mark's was ripe for something different from 3 Holy Communion services a month and members told him about alternative services that we used to hold, with Communion in the morning only twice a month. The music group service was mentioned and also the International Service and prayer for the Persecuted Church. The point was made that some people would prefer 6.30 rather than 4.30pm and that some, though probably not that many, would like some sort of Holy Communion more than twice a month. It was felt that one of the strengths of St Mark's was that it had offered a variety of services to suit everyone and that evening Communion had catered for those working with Scramblers who then missed the whole service. The point was made that new people might find a more flexible approach easier to deal with and less formal. Ben felt that we could have services geared to non-Christians as well. It was suggested that we could be very flexible with times of services, maybe having an afternoon one occasionally. 8.00 am Holy Communion was also mentioned. A midweek Holy Communion was also put forward as a possibility. Ben thanked people for their ideas.

a. Thy Kingdom Come: This launches on Ascension Day when we shall hold an evening Communion service. It was pointed out by a member that they have a programme called Daily Video which might be a good idea for morning services. Praying for the 5 people to come to Christ is also part of the programme. Another member said there was a need to talk about unanswered prayer and our questions about God's timing. Another member highlighted a TV series where losing faith had been a key part of the storyline. Ben asked for ideas to be sent to him.

b. Forest Gate Festival 2nd July: Ben asked whether there would be a desire to have a presence at the festival and was told a little about what we have done in the past, the last one being 2019. Ann and Peter Arnold said that they were prepared to run a Traidcraft stall with an additional table for people to talk to passers-by, make tea, chat etc. Others would need to be involved. The PCC agreed that this would be a good thing to be involved with and Ann offered to book the two tables.

6. Parish Worker's Report: (Sent out to members before the meeting)

Bethany Yates was pleased to report that since writing her report the Council have offered a £500 grant towards the Jubilee celebrations and allowed the church end of Lorne Road to be shut off. Bethany felt that this would be an excellent opportunity for us to engage with both our Church community and the residents of Lorne Road. She reported that the Jubilee team had met and decided to run a tea for elders on the Friday afternoon of the Bank Holiday, in church with a tailored invitation...70 guests to represent the Queen's 70-year reign. It will also be Pentecost on the Sunday of that weekend and church members will be invited to join in with a "bring your own picnic" and celebration after the morning service with members of the community joining in at whatever point they wish. It was suggested that boxes be taken around to any individuals who were not able to attend either celebration in person and Bethany agreed that the team had discussed this and felt it was a good idea.

Bethany proposed, and was seconded by Charlotte Mouzer, that the PCC grant £700 for the afternoon tea and £500 for the Sunday event, a total of £1200. There were 11 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

The meeting then discussed the proposal for a **Coffee Bike** following on from discussions and questions at the last meeting. Bethany had sent the members substantial notes about this in her report. One query had been about hygiene regulations and Bethany reported that it would be within the regulations for her to take the qualification and then cascade down the information. If this is to go ahead, it will involve a lot of purchasing and Bethany proposed having a Standing Committee to bounce ideas on and for general oversight of the project. The bike would take 10 weeks from order to delivery which would mean that we would have it in July. The figure quoted takes in the umbrella costs of running the proposed groups, for example some toys for a small play group and the actual coffee costs. A question was asked about leasing but there are no available finance options for this.

A question was asked about people to rely on to use and work the project. Bethany said she had had positive support from local Mums who would like to be involved. It was felt that we need to be able to coordinate support. Several people felt that although they liked the idea, they felt uncomfortable about the amount of money involved. Ben King and others felt that this was totally understandable but that the project presented an opportunity to give drinks and love out to our community and that it would be a real gift to those who are struggling. We can look upon it as a chance to extend the love of Christ through Helen Rigby's money. It really would be a leap of faith but this is what "Launching out into the deep" really means....it's risky. Some felt that it is what we should have been doing already but in a simpler way.

Bethany asked the PCC to approve 3 things:

- 1. For the PCC to approve £12,500 to buy the bike and the first amounts of tea, coffee etc.**
- 2. For Bethany to apply for a different LOB grant, with Mike Richardson's help, of £12,500 to cover the "umbrella" costs of the project.**
- 3. For the PCC to commit to further funds if this application is not successful, making up the full cost of £25,000.**

The Chair, Ben King proposed that we do proceed and that if the LOB application is unsuccessful, we are ready to match fund the £12,500 applied for. This was seconded by Charlotte Mouzer.

There were 7 votes in favour of the proposal and 5 abstentions with no votes against the proposal.

7. Safeguarding: (Ellen Kemp had sent a report, information about elected roles, a safer recruitment document and a visual grid of PCC responsibilities for advertising, recruiting and appointing people to roles in the church)

Ellen said that there were still three PCC members who needed to submit their training certificates to her.

She explained that we now need to be clear about the difference between leaders of groups, and helpers, because more training will be needed in the future depending upon the role.

Ellen also explained that there were now changes to the way elected roles are nominated for election i.e. PCC members and Church Wardens. We will have to use these for the APCM on 15th May. The application forms are different.

After the elections at the APCM the PSO should then hand out an eligibility form. As we have no record of these on file, the form should go to every member of the PCC.

The role of the PCC has been highlighted on the grid that Ellen sent with her report.

Ellen stressed that we now **cannot approach people individually for a volunteer role in the church. There has to be an advert which is recorded. Each person then needs a simple job description and person spec.** This will have to be looked at by PCC.

8. Treasurer's Report: (Current finance report, Annual 2021 Accounts and Annual Report for the Charity Commission was sent to members before the meeting)

1. Peter Arnold needed the Annual Report and the 2021 Annual Accounts to be passed by the meeting and then sent first to the independent examiner before going to the Charity Commission.

Peter asked the PCC to approve **1) The Annual Report and 2) the Annual Accounts for 2021.**

The PCC approved both unanimously.

2. In his verbal report on the **current financial situation** of the church Peter said that our income is somewhat down, largely because Giving income is down, but that the interest on the CCLA investment account has given us a good interest. However, for some reason, despite Peter having chased it up, there has been no gas bill since November 2021. The second half of the year may see us spending more money than we are getting in.

3. We sent £2875 to the **DEC appeal for Ukraine** (£1000 from funds and the rest from Church family gifts) There is an extra £30 to be paid into the DEC appeal.

4. **Regular weekly/monthly givers** have gone down from 36 to 32 due to people leaving and only one new giver starting. At the moment this will not cause us problems as we have the two large legacies but it is a worrying trend which we need to address.

Mike Richardson said that as a PCC we do need to address this and maybe a finance committee would be a sensible move. Maybe we also need to think about ways to cut back some of our expenditure. We also need to think about ways to increase our income. He acknowledged that through Peter's careful stewardship we are holding things together but we need to think about it and pray now.

5. Peter asked the PCC to delegate the same **financial powers** to the Parish worker as to the Vicar and Wardens by amending the existing statement to include Bethany Yates. **"The vicar, the parish worker and each of the churchwardens are individually authorised to incur expenditure of up to the following limits per calendar month for the purposes of church activities, ministry and maintenance: up to £200 for any single item, subject to a maximum of £250 per calendar month."**

The meeting agreed this unanimously. Thanks were given to Peter by Ben on behalf of the PCC for all that he has done and is doing for the church and its finances.

9. Churchwardens' Report: (Report sent out before the meeting)

Mike Richardson said how much the cross has been appreciated by both the church family and also by local residents. Mike said that it is a wonderful addition to the church. He proposed a vote of thanks which was seconded by Charlotte Mouzer. Jane Ridout was asked to write a letter of thanks to Ian Thomson and Trevor.

Mike then reported that he had seen the Returning Officer that afternoon and was fairly confident that the procedures for polling on 5th May would go more smoothly than last year. This officer seemed to be very much on top of what needed to be done.

He said it had been lovely to see so many people in church on Easter Day and that there had been a very pleasant atmosphere at the Firepit Friday last week.

Sharon Yates told the meeting that both she and Mike felt that the car park area was a valued and usable area which the PCC could consider taking forward as an area for development. If we could develop it to use more sustainably this might be a better use of the space. Ann Arnold said we should consider formally proposing to get rid of the car park at a later date when others had been consulted. Sharon had looked into buying some garden furniture made from recycled plastic which would be more comfortable for outside use and much more practical. An octagonal table with chairs was proposed, plus some bench seating and a parasol at a total cost of £2306, possibly slightly more (£2500) with an "advanced" delivery where the furniture would be unpacked and all the packaging taken away. Any other donations of garden chairs would be gratefully received. People would be able to sit away from others if they felt they would prefer to do so.

Sharon Yates proposed that we spend up to £2,500 on garden furniture and this was seconded by Mike Richardson. There was a unanimous decision to do this. It was felt that this would be a good way to trial the space before making a definitive decision about the car park.

Mike then spoke about Covid safety in church and that they are continuing to review the national and local data. He, Sharon and Ben will review the current safety measures in St Mark's, at their meeting on Thursday evening and will let PCC know of any change in procedures before the Sunday service.

Ben thanked Sharon and Mike for all their hard work as Churchwardens during this last year.

10. Deanery Synod: (There was a report from Janet Bone about the last meeting although she had not attended this herself)

Yvonne Tiley told the PCC meeting that Deanery Synod had been refreshing and it had been lovely to meet the new Bishop of Chelmsford, Bishop Guli, who demonstrated a strong sense of humility.

11. Correspondence: Jane Ridout read an email from David Dale who had resigned from the PCC slightly earlier than the end of his term of office.

Reverend Ben King thanked all the PCC members for their work during the year and especially for their discussion and understanding throughout the difficult decisions of the evening. He asked people to prayerfully consider re-standing for PCC at the APCM if their term was now at an end.

The meeting ended in prayer at 10.10pm